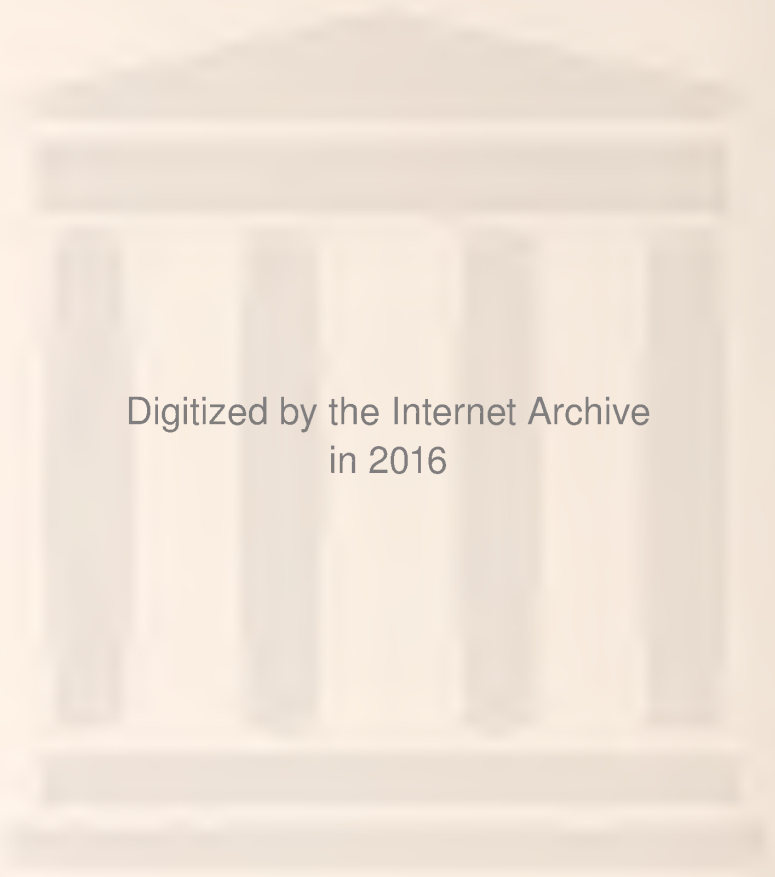


Sam Moffett

**JOY
FOR
AN
ANXIOUS
AGE**



**A STUDY GUIDE ON PHILIPPIANS
BY SAMUEL HUGH MOFFETT
AND EILEEN FLOWER MOFFETT**



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JOY FOR AN ANXIOUS AGE

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A STUDY GUIDE ON PHILIPPIANS

for individuals, circles, youth-adult groups,
and men's and women's groups
who will study and try to discern what God is saying
through his Word to his people in this anxious age

BY SAMUEL HUGH AND EILEEN FLOWER MOFFETT

Published by
BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
The United Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

for
United Presbyterian Women

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Printed in the U.S.A.

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Preface

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS is a Christian answer to anxiety. It is God's message through Paul to the church in an anxious age. Its theme is joy.

The question is, How could such great joy spring from such troubled times? The apostle was in prison. The world was going to ruin all about him. His favorite church, the congregation in Philippi, was in danger of division. Yet with the serenest confidence he wrote: "I am glad and rejoice. . . . Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me" (Phil. 2: 17-18). Why? What was there for him to be joyful about?

It should be worth a little time for us in our own age of anxiety to search this beautiful letter for the answer. We may then be rewarded with the discovery of two of the rarest secrets of the Christian life: How to be happy in an unhappy world and how to find unity in the midst of division.

The search should also give us an unparalleled picture of the inner, private life and thought of the greatest Christian who ever lived, for this is the most personal and most affectionate of all Paul's letters.

This study guide is divided into seven chapters. The first is introductory, outlining the background of the letter. The other six deal in succession with the major divisions of the letter. Each chapter contains study helps and an additional section for those with the will and the time for more intensive study.

S. H. M. and E. F. M.

THE AUTHORS

DR. AND MRS. SAMUEL H. MOFFETT are both on the faculty of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. Mrs. Moffett teaches English and shares in her husband's work through contact with the students and by helping in various church activities, particularly in the field of Christian education. Dr. Moffett is professor of the history of theology.

This Protestant seminary is now the largest one in all Asia. The present enrollment is over 250, and more than one thousand of its graduates are serving the church in Korea.

TROUBLED TIMES

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS was written from Rome probably about A.D. 62, only thirty years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and half-way through the reign of the Emperor Nero.

The nineteen hundred years that have passed since then have changed the world in almost everything but its anxieties. Today's man may conquer space, but he still wrestles as unsuccessfully as the Romans and the Philippians with the harder problems of war and poverty and unhappiness and the ultimate meaning of life.

The Anxious World of the First Century

Like ours, the age of the apostle was an age of war. Rome was the strongest power on earth, but it was discovering to its surprise that it takes more than an army to keep the world at peace. At the edges of its strength, on the far borders, there was always war. What Viet Nam is to the world today, the British Isles and Armenia were to Rome while Paul was writing to Philippi. He was writing to a city that knew war at first hand, a city of soldiers and their families. Philippi had been chosen by the Emperor as a home for veterans of Rome's wars. There were men still living there who had fought against Anthony and Cleopatra. It is not surprising, therefore, to note how often he uses martial language in the letter.

Like ours also that age was an age of uneasy extremes of wealth and poverty. The Emperor Nero could spend the equivalent of \$175,000 on Egyptian roses for just one banquet, yet one out of every three or four persons in Rome was a slave. As Rome's wealth increased, its virtue seemed to disappear. The cities decayed. Women were warned to stay off the streets of Rome at night. Every pleasure and every vice was available. Philippi, as a Roman colony, had privileged status and had become a little Rome with all the trappings and temptations of Roman baths and theaters and Dionysian revels. (Samuel Dill, *Roman Society: From Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 32; D. A. Hays, *Paul and His Epistles*, p. 410.) Note how Paul warns the church there against the enticements of luxury, the "god of the belly" (Phil. 3: 19), and encourages the Philippians in the right use of money (ch. 4: 14-18).

Like ours it was an age of rapid social change. Philippi saw the fading of "the glory that was Greece." It had been founded in northern Greece (Macedonia) by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. Now it had passed into the hands of Rome, but though the language of the city was Latin the country people still spoke Greek. The West of that day was being Romanized, as the world of today is being Westernized. There were many who bemoaned the changing of the times, but not Paul. At Philippi he wasted no time lamenting the passing of the old, but used the new Roman ways to the advantage of the gospel. (Acts, ch. 16.)

Rome itself was changing from Republic to Empire, and the city of Philippi had figured prominently in the change, for it was on the plains around the city that one of the decisive battles of history took place. There, about one hundred years before the coming of Paul, Augustus, the first emperor and the nephew of Julius Caesar, defeated the last Republican, Brutus, and Rome moved from democracy to dictatorship. Its age of rugged individualism came to an end. Emperors shook off the authority of the Senate and ruled like Oriental despots. By the time Paul wrote this letter they were even beginning to be worshiped like Oriental gods. (Dill, p. 617.) When Paul reminded the Philippians that there is a "name which is above every name," and that "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:9-11), he was calling them to a confession that would clash head on with emperor worship and in a year or two would provoke the first of the great Roman persecutions.

But above all, like ours, that age was an age when life too easily lost its meaning and man too easily gave up hope. The frantic vices of the Empire were but a vain search for happiness when real hope of happiness had died, a kind of Roman existentialism.

The best philosopher of the age was Seneca. He was a Roman millionaire who could lie on a purple couch under golden ceilings and murmur in strange despair that life is living death, "a fatal gift of which the best that can be said is that the torture is short" (Dill, p. 14).

In the same city, Rome, was a Jewish prisoner in chains. The sad and suave philosopher and the fiery little Jew probably never met. The social contacts of a prisoner in Rome were limited. But when Paul wrote to Philippi, out of that prison cell came a trumpet call of Christian joy that is the best answer ever written to Seneca's unhappy gospel of universal pessimism.

The Happy Prisoner

No one seriously doubts that Paul was the author of this letter. About a hundred years ago it was fashionable for a time, particularly in Germany, to attack the genuineness of the letter on the ground that it is too gentle and kind to be a letter of the thundering Paul. Modern scholarship, however, has discredited this line of criticism. As one recent commentator puts it, "This is a bit like saying that the Churchill who delivered warlike speeches about

Hitler could not have written friendly letters to Roosevelt. . . . If this letter was not written by Paul, nothing was." (Carroll E. Simcox, *They Met at Philippi*, p. 21. For a discussion of the rise and fall of the critics' attack, see M. R. Vincent, *Philippians* [The International Critical Commentary], pp. xxv ff.)

There is not quite the same degree of certainty about where Paul was when he wrote the letter. It was either Rome or Ephesus, probably Rome. The general situation described could fit either city. Even the reference to the "praetorian guard" (ch. 1: 13) does not rule out the possibility of Ephesus. But the weight of tradition, and the tone of Paul's references to his imprisonment and to the church in the city where he is imprisoned, make Rome the much more probable choice. The date, therefore, is about A.D. 62, ten years later than if it were written from Ephesus. (See Ernest F. Scott, "Philippians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 11, pp. 5-7.)

What the letter says is much more important than where and when it was written. It tells how a Christian, even in jail, can be happier than the wisest and richest philosopher in the greatest city on earth. Compare Seneca's "life is a fatal gift," with Paul's "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content" (ch. 4: 11). Moreover, there was something deeper than contentment to Paul's happiness. He was a man who knew the exquisite joy of vision—a vision that once had called him "over to Macedonia" to Philippi, and a vision that now even through prison bars showed him the whole world as Christ's. (Ch. 2: 10-11.)

Philippi and the Christian Mission

It may have been the Philippian church's strategic position in Paul's world vision of Christian mission that gave it a special place in his heart and made this letter the warmest and most affectionate of all his letters to the churches. (Ch. 1: 7-9.) Paul loved Philippi as his first church in Europe. But more than that—for the geographical distinction did not mean as much then as it does now—Philippi marked an important step forward in the Christian march on Rome. Paul had already preached to Jews and Greeks. At Philippi, which had special Roman status as a colony of Roman citizens, he was reaching the edge of Rome itself, and Rome was the gateway to the whole world. It is in this global sense that Paul can describe the church in Philippi as "the beginning of the gospel" (ch. 4: 15).

Philippi was indeed strategically located for mission in the world of that day. The main arterial highway, the Egnatian Way, between Asia and Rome, was guarded at the edge of Europe by the forts of Philippi. So when Christianity entered Western history from Asia, it came with Paul through Philippi.

One of the most overworked myths of our time is that Western imperialism invaded the Orient through the Christian missionary movement. *Philippians* reminds us that this is all wrong. The first missionary went the other way.

The gospel did not “invade” Asia; it came from Asia, and its first beachhead in the European West, so far as we have any record, was at Philippi. Furthermore, in the Communist myth, the missionary is the aggressor. In Philippi he is in prison; and he is in prison again when he writes to the Philippians. In the Communist myth the missionary buys his converts with capitalist gold. In Philippi, again, it is just the other way around. It is the converts who are paying the missionary. The whole letter to Philippians is really just a thank-you note for their gifts. In the Communist myth, the missionary is an imperialist; in Philippi, the missionary is of a conquered race, and it is his converts who are the imperialists. Curiously enough, even the little church there is born with an imperialist tinge in the house of Lydia, a seller of the imperial purple. As for the missionary, he was just a laborer, a maker of tents.

Look back then and imagine the apostle, the pioneer to Europe, as he steps ashore at the port of Neapolis. The account is in Acts, ch. 16, where the narrative suddenly switches to the first person, indicating that Luke had joined the party there. He was eager, perhaps, to show Paul his hometown, for some think that Luke was born in Philippi.

So the little missionary party hurries over the coastal ridge to the city nine miles away, with its Greek town stretching along the hills and the Roman colony spreading across the plain. Perhaps they passed a grove of trees where the river ran outside the city and where a small group of Jews met on the Sabbath for prayer. There a few days later the Lord opened Lydia’s heart. “It was in green pastures and beside still waters that St. Paul won his first European convert,” observes James Hastings (in the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Vol. 2, p. 215). And she was a woman. The “man of Macedonia” turned out to be a woman!

The Women in Philippi

The church in Philippi is unique in the New Testament for the place occupied there by women. It is clear witness to the fact that from the beginning the Christian faith moved toward the emancipation of women. The first believer in Philippi was a businesswoman. (Acts 16: 14.) The first open demonstration of Christian power there was the deliverance of a slave girl. (Vs. 16-18.) Ten years later, when Paul writes to the church, two of the only three leaders in the church mentioned by name are women (Phil. 4: 2), and he specifically notes the help that women had been to him in this the beginning of the Christian mission to the West (ch. 4: 3).

The Letter

For anyone who likes neat outlines constructed around a central, unifying theme, Philippians is going to be a disappointment. It is not an essay, like Romans or Hebrews. It is pure letter—warm, personal, repetitious, and like some sermons, twice as long as it starts out to be. Paul finishes his letter in ch. 2 (as we divide it). He begins ch. 3 with “Finally,” and then goes on for

two more chapters. He writes seven verses in ch. 4, says "Finally" again, and goes on for twice as many more verses. Even after he has said "Amen" (ch. 4: 20), he cannot stop but adds a three-verse postscript.

Analytically, the letter divides into six main sections:

1. *Greetings and prayer* for the Philippians (ch. 1: 1-11).
2. Then the subject shifts to *Paul's situation in Rome* (ch. 1: 12-26).
3. His thought turns back to Philippi with an *appeal for unity* (chs. 1: 27 to 2: 18).
4. Again in Rome, he tells of *his future plans* (ch. 2: 19-30).
5. To Philippi once more, *warnings and appeals* (chs. 3: 1 to 4: 8).
6. *Thanks for the gift* from Philippi (ch. 4: 9-23).

But we will divide the letter a little differently and outline it as follows:

PHILIPPIANS: AN OUTLINE

- I. The Joys of Partnership (ch. 1: 1-11)
 - A. Paul and His Partner: A Greeting (vs. 1-2)
 1. The partnership is for mission (v. 1)
 2. The partnership is in Christ (vs. 1-2)
 - B. Paul and His Partners: A Prayer (vs. 3-11)
 1. They were his joy in the past (vs. 3-5)
 2. They are his beloved friends now (vs. 7-8)
 3. He is confident of their future (vs. 6, 9-11)
- II. The Joys of Adversity (ch. 1: 12-30)
 - A. The Advantages of Opposition (vs. 12-18)
 1. Imprisonment can help the gospel (vs. 12-14)
 2. Even church division has its uses (vs. 15-18)
 - B. The Hope of Deliverance (vs. 19-26)
 1. Our hope is in Christ (vs. 19-21)
 2. Our deliverance is for others (vs. 22-26)
 - C. The Christians' Part in Victory (ch. 1: 27-30)
 1. Be moral (v. 27)
 2. Be united (v. 27)
 3. Be brave (v. 28)
 4. Accept suffering (v. 29)
 5. Be involved (v. 30)
- III. The Joys of Unity (ch. 2: 1-11)
 - A. The Call to Unity: Be One (vs. 1-2)
 - B. The Prerequisite of Unity: Be Humble (vs. 3-4)
 - C. The Secret of Unity: Be in Christ (vs. 5-11)
 1. The power is in Christ (v. 5)
 2. The example is Christ (vs. 6-11)

- IV. The Pursuit of Unity (ch. 2: 12-30)
 - A. The Responsibility of Unity (vs. 12-13)
 - B. The Marks of Responsibility (vs. 14-18)
 - C. Leadership for Unity (vs. 19-30)
 - 1. Timothy, the missionary partner (vs. 19-24)
 - 2. Epaphroditus, the local leader (vs. 25-30)

- V. Warnings Against Three Threats to Unity (ch. 3: 1-21)
 - A. Against Self-righteous Legalists (vs. 1-11)
 - 1. Rites are nothing; Christ is everything (vs. 1-3)
 - 2. Race is nothing; Christ is everything (vs. 4-7)
 - 3. Our righteousness is nothing; Christ is everything (vs. 8-11)
 - B. Against Self-satisfied Saints (vs. 12-16)
 - C. Against Self-serving Sinners (vs. 17-21)

- VI. Final Appeals for Joy and Unity in Christ (ch. 4: 1-23)
 - A. Appeal for Unity (vs. 1-3)
 - B. Appeal for Joy (vs. 4-7)
 - C. Concluding Remarks (vs. 8-23)
 - 1. The Christian's mind (vs. 8-9)
 - 2. The Christian's resources (vs. 10-23)

STUDY HELPS

1. Read together Acts, ch. 16.
What three segments of society were represented by the first converts in Philippi? What segments of society is your church reaching? Does it miss any? Why?
2. How did Paul and Timothy make use of Roman influences in Philippi for the advantage of the gospel? Applying this lesson to ourselves, list ways in which we might take advantage of social change in our own society for the sake of our revolutionary faith.
3. Review the reasons for Paul's great interest in Philippi. What can we learn from him in terms of strategic planning? Where are the most important centers for Christian mission in today's world?
4. List the reasons why our age is called "An Anxious Age." As you begin to read Philippians, jot down any Christian answers to these specific anxieties that you may find.
5. Locate and begin to familiarize yourselves with some of the following commentaries and study books (perhaps available in the church library):

William Barclay, ed., *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (The Daily Study Bible).

Archibald M. Hunter, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians* (The Layman's Bible Commentary, Vol. 22).

J. H. Michael, *Philippians* (The Moffatt New Testament Commentary).

Paul S. Rees, *The Adequate Man: Paul in Philippians*.

Ernest F. Scott, "Philippians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 11.

Carroll E. Simcox, *They Met at Philippi*.

And some of the following Bible versions: The Revised Standard Version, J. B. Phillips' *The New Testament in Modern English*, *The New English Bible*, *The Moffatt Translation*, K. Taylor's *Living Letters*.

6. If you are interested in further information on the world of Paul's day, see Samuel Dill, *Roman Society: From Nero to Marcus Aurelius*; or S. Angus, *The Environment of Early Christianity*; or the Pelican paperback, R. H. Barrows, *The Romans* (esp. pp. 10-11, 59-69, 89-92, 179-184).

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE MORE INTENSIVE STUDY

1. You will need a good concordance, or at least a Bible with a concordance included. Pick out the five most important Bible passages on joy, which you can find outside of Philippians.
2. If you have a topical concordance, see what you can find in the Bible about anxiety, fretfulness, worry.
3. Who are some of the important women mentioned by name in the New Testament church? What was the place of women in the life of the community of believers? Read Luke 1: 5-38; ch. 2: 36-38; ch. 10: 38-42; John 12: 3-8; Acts 9: 36-41; I Tim. 2: 9-14; II Tim. 3: 6-8; I Peter 3: 1-6. How do you reconcile what these passages say about women in the church with Paul's statement in I Cor. 14: 34?
4. Make your own outline of Phil., ch. 1.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT STUDY PERIOD

1. Read Philippians through at one sitting. If possible, read all four chapters every day for thirty days. Study in depth Phil. 1: 1-11.
2. Read the next chapter in the Study Guide.

THANK GOD FOR PARTNERS

Philippians 1:1-11

AS THE APOSTLE PAUL begins his last letter to his friends in the church at Philippi, three things soon became evident. He is very much concerned about something. He is absolutely committed to someone. And he is quite happy about almost everything. Such a mixture of concern, commitment, and joy is a remarkably fine combination of mental and spiritual attitudes for any Christian in any age.

At first, in his opening words of greeting, it is the note of commitment that dominates, but indirectly woven in is also something of the concern and the joy.

Philippians 1: 1-2—Slaves, Saints, and a Partner

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ . . . , to all the saints in Christ . . . at Philippi . . . : Grace . . . and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(NOTE: The text here and below will be condensed for quick reference and rapid sequence. Compare it with the full text in your Bible.)

1. The first strong word in the letter is "servant." Literally it means "slave," as if the first thing Paul wants to make dramatically clear is his *absolute commitment to Jesus Christ*. His letter is many things: a hymn of joy, a thank-you note, a love letter to a church, a lesson in missionary strategy, and an apostolic plea for Christian unity. But Paul begins where joy and thanksgiving and love and mission and unity must all begin. He begins with Jesus Christ.

Before he has so much as finished the first words of greeting, he has named the name of Christ three times and triple-stitched into the opening fabric of the epistle a monogram, as it were—a sign of the underlying secret of all that he wants to say to Philippi about unity and joy. So the letter opens with this rapid repetition of "the name," reminding the Philippians of three fundamental facts of the Christian life. J. H. Michael summarizes them thus: "Our relation *to* Christ ['servant of Christ']; our state *in* Christ ['saints in Christ'];

and our blessings *from* Christ [‘grace and peace from . . . the Lord Jesus Christ’].” Slavery, sainthood, and blessings may be a singularly unattractive blend of ideas to most modern readers, but everything that Paul is about to say to the Philippians is rooted in a right understanding of those three words.

The *slavery* of which Paul speaks is not the abject, crawling thing that human masters make of it. Paul’s only “slavery” is absolute obedience to and total possession by Jesus Christ, his Lord and God. It is complete selflessness and utter loyalty. This is the slavery that makes men free. In the Old Testament it brought men to their feet before kings as “servants of God,” and prophets. “The Christian man,” said Luther, “is most free lord of all, and servant to none; the Christian man is most dutiful servant of all and subject to everyone.”

The *sainthood* (literally, “holiness”) of which Paul speaks is not the stained-glass window kind. “Saint” is the ordinary New Testament word for Christian. It means “holy” but not “holier than thou.” It is a little more like an honorary degree than an earned one, in that it does not imply a perfection achieved, but a position bestowed and a responsibility to be kept. That position is “in Christ,” which is Paul’s key phrase in the description of what it means to be a Christian. Its meaning will become more clear as it recurs throughout this letter. Here he calls the Philippians “saints” not because he thinks they are without fault—he will soon be rebuking them for some of their shortcomings—but because when they are “in Christ,” Christ’s holiness begins to be theirs.

The *blessings* are *grace and peace*. Here Paul makes a beautiful new Christian greeting out of the common Greek salutation, “Grace,” and the old Hebrew greeting, “Peace.” But more important, he sums up in those two short words the joy and power of a new faith that breaks down the barriers between Jew and Greek. *Grace* is not the languid, rather effete, word that we make of it today. Basically, it is the undeserved favor that God shows to man. It is God’s “active love,” as P. T. Forsyth puts it. There is power in it: God’s power for man’s weakness. And there is joy in it: God’s joy for man’s sorrow. The result is *peace*, which is all from God, for no man has joy and peace and power from himself.

2. Not so obvious in these opening verses, but very much on the apostle’s mind, as later parts of the letter will show, is his *concern for the unity of the church*. The first hint of it, perhaps, is a faint stress on the word “all.” Paul has had word of divisions among the Christians at Philippi, but he plays no favorites. He reminds them that they are all one in Christ, and greets “all the saints in Christ . . . at Philippi.”

The theme of unity is introduced in another and particularly graceful way by Paul’s first three words: “Paul and Timothy. . . .” It was Paul’s letter, not Timothy’s, but with these first words the old pioneer lifts up his junior missionary colleague into full partnership and commends him to the church. He

guards against any opening wedge of division between the older and younger generations. Paul is Christ's slave, and Timothy's partner.

Philippians 1: 3-11—Completing the Partnership

I thank . . . God in all my remembrance of you, . . . making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. . . . I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. . . . I hold you in my heart. . . . I yearn for you all. . . . And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and . . . discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and . . . be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through . . . Christ.

In the words of greeting (vs. 1-2), Paul made clear his relation to Timothy his partner, and to Christ his Lord. Now, beginning with v. 3, he makes equally clear his relationship to the Christians at Philippi. They are not just converts and followers. As surely as Timothy, they too are his partners in mission, and the thought moves him to words that are lyric with joy and affection. The past, the present, and the future all move across his mind as he prays for them.

1. *The past fills him with joy* (vs. 3-5). "I thank my God . . . with joy, . . . for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now," he writes. The King James Version has "fellowship in the gospel," but the Revised Standard Version is better, for what moves Paul to joy is the memory of "their common participation with him in spreading the gospel" (*Expositor's Greek Testament*). For a missionary like Paul there is no greater joy than when the convert becomes a partner.

My father, who was a pioneer in Korea, singled out as his moment of most intense joy on the mission field the day he commissioned the first Korean to volunteer for missionary service. Sixteen years earlier, entering North Korea, he had faced a mob in the streets of Pyongyang. Out of the back alleys they poured to stone the "foreign devil." One of the men who tried to kill him that day was a young tough named Yi Kui-Poong. Sixteen years later, in 1907, father found himself facing Yi Kui-Poong again. This time it was at the first meeting of the first presbytery of the new Korean Presbyterian Church, and father, as the moderator, was about to commission its first missionary—Yi Kui-Poong, who had been converted, trained, and was now ordained for mission on remote Quelpart Island. We call this a "new day in mission," as the younger churches join with us in full partnership in the work of reaching the whole inhabited earth for Christ. But it is not new. It is a pattern as old as Philippi.

What was Philippi's "partnership in the gospel"? Paul refers to it again at the end of his letter. "When I left Macedonia," he says (ch. 4: 15-16), "no

church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only; for even in Thessalonica you sent me help." The Philippian church was not only the first in Europe, historically and geographically, insofar as we have record; it was also the first to move from the receiving to the giving stage. It supported Paul financially.

2. *The present is full of love* (vs. 7-9). We would expect a man in prison to be praying to get out, but not Paul. His prayer is filled not with the anxieties of the moment but with its blessings. Where we would pray, "Help, Lord, I have problems," Paul prays, "Thank you, Lord, I have love." An undercurrent of deep affection between Paul and the Philippian Christians ripples its way all through the letter. The words almost trip over each other, as twice in as many verses Paul tells the Philippians how he loves them: "I hold you in my heart" (v. 7); "How I yearn for you" (v. 8). It would all be shallow and excessively sentimental did not the apostle reveal the deeps from which his love wells up: the grace of God (v. 7), and the love of Christ (v. 8). Partnership in grace sweetens the partnership of work with love. And, as another apostle put it, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (I John 4: 18). Love is one of the best Christian answers to anxiety.

3. *The future is sure* (vs. 6, 10-11). The future holds no more anxiety for Paul than the past or the present. "I am sure that he who began a good work in you," he writes, "will bring it to completion." But just how realistic was Paul's confidence? Where is the church in Philippi today? Ten feet underground! I have seen pictures of the plain of Philippi: tumbling wall, a heap of stones where archaeologists have scratched away the dust of centuries, a column standing bare and broken against a line of snowy hills. That is all. There is no church left.

We spoke of Communist myths, in the first chapter of this guide; there are Christian myths as well. One of them is that churches cannot be destroyed; that however fierce their persecutors may be, God's promise stands firm, "The gates of hell shall not prevail." That promise is true, but it must not be interpreted naïvely and unbiblically. It is a misunderstanding both of God's promise and of Paul's confidence to imagine that any church anywhere is indestructible. God's promise is to the church, the whole church, not to individual churches, and like the sign of Noah's rainbow, though it stands as assurance against total disaster, it is no guarantee of local immunity. There have been many floods since Noah's day, and many churches have been wiped out since our Lord made his promise to his church. It happened to Philippi, and it can happen again.

Was the apostle's confidence, then, nothing but wishful thinking? Not at all. His confidence is in the One who began the good work, in Jesus Christ, not in those in whom the work is done. He loves the Philippians, but he knows better than to put his hope for the future in any man. The future belongs to God. The church in Philippi may be gone, but the church of God has circled the world.

There is, however, a hint in history that even the Philippian church did not disappear without first playing its part in mission and in victory. Origen, writing about one hundred and fifty years after Paul's death, says that the Clement mentioned in Phil. 4: 3 is Clement of Rome. This may well not be so, for Clement was a common name and we have only Origen's word for it five generations after the fact. But I like to think that Origen may be right, and that the little church in Philippi, firstfruits of Paul's mission to Europe, took its partnership with him in that mission so seriously that when at last the great apostle laid down his life a martyr for the gospel in Rome, his beloved Philippians sent Clement from their small number to take his place. Clement, a missionary, "whose name is in the book of life," was writer of the earliest Christian document known outside the New Testament, Clement's *Letter to the Corinthians*. What a fitting answer to Paul's confidence that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion," and to his prayer "that your love may abound . . . filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through . . . Christ, to the glory . . . of God."

Note the last words. At the end, as at the beginning, Paul's confidence for the future rests not in his partners but in his Lord.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Paul's definition of a saint? (See Rom. 1: 7; I Cor. 1: 2; Eph. 4: 12; II Thess. 1: 10.) How does that compare to the popular use of the word today?
2. What three "unities" do you find in the first two verses?
3. What is the difference between "concern" and "anxiety"?
4. Barclay points out ten kinds of joy that are described in Philippians: the joy of Christian prayer, the joy that Jesus Christ is preached, etc. Begin to spot the reference and make your own list, as our study continues.
5. How often does Paul repeat the words "you all" in this section? What does this suggest?
6. In what sense will God bring to completion his good work in us, not only as a body of believers but also as individuals?
7. As Paul turns from song to supplication in v. 9, what kind of love is he referring to? What does the word "abound" mean? What is the implication in this prayer that their love may abound *more and more*? See Rom. 5: 5.
8. What is the significance in Paul's prayer that their love may also be rich in knowledge and all discernment? Note the balance between love and

enlightenment. Is there a difference between love and sentimentalism? How, in Matt. 9: 27-31, for example, did a natural and good reaction become the enemy of the best?

9. What are the fruits of righteousness? (See Gal. 5: 22-23.) See if you can, by contrast, name some of the fruits of self-righteousness.
10. Look up information on "partnership in mission" and today's changing missionary patterns.

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE MORE INTENSIVE STUDY

1. Meaning depends on grammatical structure as well as on vocabulary. Note the importance of the connectives in this passage. Pick out these connectives and study the meaning and flow of thought in the passage as revealed by them; e.g., the "and" in v. 1; "to," v. 1; "with," v. 1; "inasmuch," in v. 7 (KJV); "that," v. 10. What do the connectives tell us about the difference between "approve what is excellent" in Phil. 1: 10 and the same phrase in Rom. 2: 17 f.?
2. There are two references to the "day of Christ" in this section. What does Paul mean by the phrase? See I Thess. 3: 12-13; Matt. 24: 29 ff.; I Cor. 15: 24-25; Rev. 11: 15; John 6: 38 ff.
3. For a good ecclesiastical debate, investigate why Presbyterians derive comfort from the reference to bishops (plural) in Phil. 1: 1. See also Titus 1: 5-7, and Bishop Lightfoot's commentary, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, on this verse, pp. 193 f.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Study Phil. 1: 12-30.
2. Read Acts, chs. 21 to 28.
3. Read Chapter 3 in the Study Guide.

THE JOYS OF ADVERSITY

Philippians 1:12-30

THE FIRST PARAGRAPHS of Paul's letter have been full of normal joy in work to do, and the friends and partners with whom to do it. But Paul's situation was not normal as the Philippians knew very well. In fact, they were so concerned about him that they had sent one of their church members, Epaphroditus, to see what could be done about his desperate position.

But Paul turns the tables on them. Epaphroditus had come to comfort *him*; now he sends him back with this letter to comfort *them*. (Phil. 2: 25-30.) It seems that they are far more anxious than he is. He is in prison, but he is deliriously happy. He uses the word "joy" or "rejoice" over and over again—thirteen times in this one short letter.

Some may have thought him more delirious than happy. Anyone can rejoice in friendship and love and a chance to work; it is quite another thing to rejoice in adversity. How can he be serious? He says first, for example (in vs. 15-18), that he rejoices about the situation he faces in Rome. But he is under lock and key, and outside his cell in the city of Rome the church has split in two with anxious, rival evangelists preaching only to cause Paul more trouble. "So I rejoice," he says. It seems absurd.

Second (in vs. 19-26), he rejoices at the prospect of deliverance from prison. This would make more sense, except that the odds were already turning ominously against him. It is impossible to know exactly the date when Paul wrote this passage, but it was probably about the time of the death of Burrhus, commander of the Praetorian Guard. Burrhus was the last *good* commander of the guard under Nero. He may have been responsible for Paul's rather lenient treatment up to that time. But when Burrhus died, a tiger took his place, the hated Tigellinus, debaucher of the emperor's own sisters and the worst of Nero's creatures. So with Burrhus dead or about to die, Paul's best chances of freedom were already gone. Yet he wrote, "I shall rejoice."

Joy under such circumstances was madness. But Paul was not "under the circumstances," he was "in Christ"; and when life closes in, as Paul now explains to the Philippians, the difference between despair and hope is Christ. Perhaps, as he writes, his mind goes back ten years, and he remembers that there was a prison in Philippi once too. They had tried to keep a missionary

there, a missionary who refused to act like a prisoner, who refused to recognize defeat, who sang songs in the night. And after the hymns, and after the earthquake, it was the prison-keeper, not the prisoner, who tried to commit suicide. And it was the prisoner, not the prison-keeper, who opened the doors—the doors to eternal life.

Philippians 1: 12-18—Profiting from Opposition

I want you to know . . . that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known . . . to all . . . that my imprisonment is for Christ; and most of the brethren have been made . . . much more bold to speak the word of God. . . . Some indeed preach Christ from envy . . . , not sincerely . . . thinking to afflict me . . . , but others from good will . . . out of love. . . . What then? . . . Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and . . . I rejoice.

Kierkegaard remarks in *Works of Love*: “For practical purposes, it is at the hopeless moment that we require the hopeful man. . . . Exactly where hope ceases to be reasonable, it begins to be useful.” (Quoted in “Philippians,” *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 11, p. 35.) That almost describes Paul in prison, but not quite. Kierkegaard is a bit too much of an irrationalist. Not Paul. There is nothing unreasonable about his joy. His joy was Christ.

1. *He rejoices in imprisonment because of Christ* (vs. 12-14). Why? Because his arrest, which was supposed to be a setback to the cause, instead has suddenly focused attention on the faith and all at once the name of Christ is being heard everywhere in Rome. Christianity thrives on opposition. “The blood of the martyrs,” said Tertullian centuries ago, “is the seed of the church,” and it is still true today as the Communists begrudgingly admit. “Religion is like a nail,” complained the Russian, Lunacharski. “The harder you hit it, the deeper you drive it into the wood.”

2. Unfortunately not all the opposition was coming from outside the church. Yet *Paul can rejoice even in church division because of Christ* (vs. 15-18). It may come as a shock to find the apostle in this passage virtually condoning separatism and rejoicing in the splintering of the sects. The truth, of course, is that it was not the division that made him glad. The secret of his joy was his supreme confidence in his Lord whose name, when preached even in faction and church partisanship, speaks with such compelling power that it can convert and save.

This passage was a comfort to John Calvin during the distressing divisions of the Reformation. No one worked harder than he to heal those divisions, but he failed. Refusing to be discouraged, however, he took heart from Paul’s example at Rome and wrote in his commentary on these verses, “Hearing that that impure dog, Carolus, was scattering the seeds of pure doctrine, [we, like

Paul] gave thanks to God because he had made use of that most profligate and worthless villain for his glory." There is a little too much gritting of the teeth at the opposition, perhaps in the old Reformer, but at least he had found the secret of Christian joy even in the midst of division.

Philippians 1: 19-26—Alive or Dead—Christ's!

Yes, and I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of . . . Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, . . . and . . . now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . . Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. . . . My desire is to depart and be with Christ. . . . But to remain . . . is more necessary on your account. . . . [So] I shall remain . . . , for your progress and joy . . . , that in me you may . . . glory in Christ.

Paul's third reason for joy is his hope of deliverance. This would seem to require less explanation than his joy in imprisonment and his joy in division, but it is not quite what it seems. True, he speaks of coming to Philippi again (v. 26), but he is too much of a realist not to know that his only release from prison may be the deliverance of death. He is, however, magnificently unconcerned. The three great passions of his life have utterly obliterated all concern for himself. These are his love for Christ, his love for others, and his love for his work.

1. *Christ comes first.* He is the key to all joy in adversity. In one of the greatest verses in the whole Bible, Paul puts it thus: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (v. 21). There is a modern echo of that apostolic affirmation in the words of a Korean martyr shot by the Communists. Unshakable to the end, he said simply to his murderers, "Alive or dead I am Jesus Christ's man." When a man is "in Christ," nothing in life or in death can change the relationship or shake the position. Then life loses its anxieties and death all its terrors. The man who is not prepared to die, someone has remarked, is not prepared to live.

2. Paul's second passion in life was *his love for others*. He is so busy caring for them he has no time to worry about himself. Verse 20 suggests that a premonition of death has come to him, but immediately he is more concerned about what this may mean to his friends than about what it will mean to him. So with exquisite grace he prepares them for any eventuality. He would be glad to die, he assures the Philippians, for death would only bring him nearer to the Lord he loves. Only his love and his feeling of continued responsibility for them makes life preferable to death. Whatever lies ahead of him, therefore, he will accept with joy. The future frightens only the man or woman who lives for himself.

3. The third passion of Paul's life is *his work*. So great was his joy in it (v. 22) that not even the frustrating interruptions of arrest and imprisonment

could annoy him for long. He could move no farther than his chain, but he was forever planning ahead, mapping out new missionary journeys. The next one, he says (v. 26), will bring him through Philippi. But like any good general, Paul has alternative plans. What if he is not released? In that case, says Paul, in the final paragraph of this first chapter, the battle is up to you Philippians.

Philippians 1: 27-30—Getting Into the Fight

Only let your . . . life be worthy of . . . Christ . . . whether I come . . . or [not]. . . Stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith . . . , and not frightened . . . by your opponents. This is a clear omen . . . of their destruction. . . For . . . you should not only believe in him [Christ] but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which . . . [is] mine.

Paul has just told the Philippians that the hope of the future is in Christ. It is no real help, however, to anxious, troubled people to throw a Christian truth at them, and tell them that if they will only believe it all will be well. Christian victory is not won by platitudes, and Christian truth must be *put* to work or it *won't* work. So Paul does not let truth wither away into platitudes for lack of application. Having revealed the secret of victory, Christ, he goes right on to point out that the Christian must play his own part in that victory.

He is writing to a soldier's town and he puts it in vivid military language. He tells the troops to shape up, close ranks, be men, endure hardship, and engage the enemy. The stress is on five important Christian duties:

1. *Right conduct* ("let your manner of life be worthy"). There is no room in the Christian life for orthodoxy without ethics. More than one church has been split by Christians trying to excuse themselves for ethical lapses by their theological orthodoxy. Paul would not tolerate such a travesty of the faith. He says as clearly as James that "faith without works is dead" (KJV). The progress of thought in all his letters runs directly from doctrine to conduct.

2. *Unity* ("one spirit . . . one mind"). This is the first direct plea for unity in the letter, but it will become the central theme in the next chapter, and it was implicit in this chapter from the first "and" of the first verse. Paul had conceded in vs. 15-18 above that factionalism cannot destroy the gospel. Now he begins to qualify that concession. It is no less true, he reminds the Philippians, among whom some signs of discord were appearing, that Christian unity is imperative for Christian victory. Division cannot defeat, but it can prevent victory.

3. *Courage* ("not frightened . . . by your opponents"). The courage spoken of here is probably courage of conviction, not physical courage. Open per-

secution had not yet begun. But Philippi was an idol-worshipping town, and the opponents referred to were in all probability idol worshipers demanding compromises from the "one-God" Christians. "Stand firm for your convictions," Paul tells his people. Ethics without orthodoxy is as wrong as orthodoxy without ethics.

4. *Suffering*. Paul makes no empty promises of easy, bargain-rate salvation. As it took Christ's suffering for us to win us our salvation, so it should come as no surprise if we are called upon to suffer for him. With characteristic resilience Paul looks on this kind of suffering as a gift, not a burden. "It has been *granted* to you . . . [to] suffer." (V. 29.)

5. *Involvement* ("engaged in . . . conflict"). Twice in this paragraph the apostle indicates that the Christian life is not withdrawal from the world but involvement in it. In the plea for right conduct in v. 27, the verb literally means "be worthy citizens," or in other words, "take your right place in civic affairs." That is the positive side. Christians are to stand up and be counted in community action for justice and order and right. There is also a negative side. Like Paul, we may be drawn into conflict and suffering. This is not to be shunned as unchristian. It is part of the engagement, the involvement. The long line of Christian involvement in history runs straight from Philippi to Selma.

Phillips paraphrases the last verse of the chapter thus: "It is now your turn to take part in that battle you once saw me engaged in." Paul knows he is nearing the end of his fight, and like an old soldier turning over the command, he writes this last letter to his partners, the Philippians. It is part of the joy of struggle, and part of our hope of victory, that there are those who will carry on where we leave off.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the nature of the opposition encountered by Paul and what use does he make of it in developing his message in ch. 1?
2. Look up some other Bible references that teach us that a Christian lives above the circumstances. (For example, John 16: 16-20; James 1: 2. Find others.)
3. If you were writing a paper on Phil. 1: 15-18, what title would you use?
4. What does Paul mean when he says in ch. 1: 19, "For I know that . . . this will turn out for my deliverance"? What does the word "this" refer to? What kind of deliverance is he expecting?
5. Paul seems to have a conviction that the prayers of the saints are one of the two factors in his deliverance. What other evidence is there in Scrip-

ture for the importance that God places on believers' prayer for the achievement of divine purpose?

6. There are prisons of the mind as well as of the body. To what fears, jealousies, and opposition in present-day America does Paul speak?
7. What kind of practical involvement are Christians called into today?

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE MORE INTENSIVE STUDY

1. How did Paul happen to be in prison in the first place? (Refer back to Acts, chs. 21 to 28.)
2. What was the Praetorian Guard? (Phil. 1: 13.) See also ch. 4: 22. What does it indicate about the spread of the gospel?
3. Write your own paraphrase of ch. 1: 19-30.
4. Make a study of what the Bible means by "suffering for his sake" (v. 29). See Matt. 16: 24; II Tim. 2: 12; II Cor. 4:17; Heb. 11: 25; I Peter 4: 1; etc.
5. The vital interrelationship of orthodoxy and ethics in Paul's teaching is emphatic. Separating them and emphasizing either the one or the other has resulted in a number of dangerous trends in the church through the centuries and even in our time. Find out what some of these are.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Study Phil. 2: 1-11.
2. Read Chapter 4 in the Study Guide.

A MIND FOR JOY

Philippians 2: 1-11

PAUL NOW COMES to the heart of his letter. His call to battle, to involvement, and to mission in the closing paragraphs of the first chapter leads him inevitably to a call to unity; for mission demands unity, and unity proceeds out of mission.

Bishop Azariah, the saintly evangelist of South India and the first Indian ever to become an Anglican bishop, tells of an interview he had with Dr. Ambedkar, leader of India's untouchable millions, the *harijans*, the outcastes. It was back in 1935. Dr. Ambedkar was about to forsake Hinduism. "Hinduism is not a religion; it is a disease," he had said. Bishop Azariah hoped he would bring his millions into the Christian faith. "Your people, deeply religious, cannot live without a religion," said the bishop. "It is not enough to give up Hinduism. They must have something else." He offered them Christianity. Dr. Ambedkar replied: "I am well aware of all that the Christian church has done for the outcastes, but we Harijans are one community all over India, and our strength is in our unity. Can you in the Christian church offer us any unity comparable to that?" And the bishop was silent.

Since Christian mission so often demands unity for evangelistic effectiveness, it is no accident that Paul the missionary writes to Philippi pleading for unity. But he begins with a more personal plea. Your unity is my joy, he writes, so "fill up my cup of happiness" (*The New English Bible*), "complete my joy" (RSV), and be one. A mind for joy is one mind in Christ.

Philippians 2: 1-2—The Call to Unity

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love,
... complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same
love.

Just what it was in Philippi that called for this appeal we can only conjecture. Perhaps it was a personal quarrel between two members of the church, as the reference in Phil. 4: 2 seems to indicate. It was not doctrinal division as in Galatia, or moral weakness as in Corinth, but rather, some form of jealousy or personal ambition. To check such lack of concord before it

breaks into open schism, Paul writes this moving appeal for harmony. He bases his appeal on two great cornerstones.

1. *Union in Christ*. Again that important phrase appears, *in Christ*. “If there is any encouragement in Christ . . .” He begins with Christ and bases his whole appeal for unity on the actual union of the believer with the body of Christ. “Union with Christ,” Paul is saying, “demands unity in Christian life.” Appeals to church unity that begin anywhere else but with “union *in Christ*” are rootless and baseless.

2. *Love*. “If . . . any incentive of love . . .” The first appeal is objective, our union in Christ; the second is warmly subjective. It is an appeal to that sympathetic love of the brethren which is characteristic of real Christians. Love is the best word to describe the Christian God. He is love. Love is the best word to describe the Christian religion; it is love of God. And love is the best word to describe the Christian way of life; it is love of our fellowmen.

Unity in the church, then, is built on these two cornerstones: our union in Christ, and our love for one another. If either of these is missing, we cannot say we love God and we are not rightly in the church at all. (I John 4: 16-20.) The rest of v. 2 only repeats the lesson in other words. “Participation in the Spirit” is another description of “union in Christ”; and “affection” and “sympathy” are aspects of love. These expressions of love are the foundations of unity in the church.

But what about doctrine? Is that not also basic to union? Yes, but it is dangerous to try to read too much into any one passage. Paul is not talking about church reunion after a schism. He is, rather, forestalling a division. He is talking to a single congregation, undivided by heresies, and the basis of unity in such a group is precisely as he describes it: oneness in Christ, and love toward one another. Given these two basics, it is for Christians to “live together in harmony [and] live together in love, as though [they] had only one mind and one spirit between [them]” (Phil. 2: 2, Phillips).

That is easier said than done. How are Christians actually to work out such happy harmony? Having told the Philippians what to do, Paul now proceeds to tell them how to do it.

Philippians 2: 3-4—The Prerequisite of Unity

Do nothing from selfishness . . . , but in humility count others better than yourselves. . . . Look not only to . . . [your] own interests, but also to the interests of others.

This is the second step in Paul’s appeal. First, be united. Second, if you want to be united, be humble. This is what the church should be like, a com-

munity where nothing is done in selfishness or conceit, but where in humility each thinks more of others than he does of himself. “A marvellous community,” exclaims one commentator, Lenski, “in which no one is looked down upon, but every one looked up to.”

But how often humility, which is the indispensable ingredient in Christian living, becomes the missing ingredient in the way we actually live. “When I look back upon my own religious experience,” says Andrew Murray in his little book *Humility*, “or round upon the Church of Christ in the world, I stand amazed at the thought of how *little* humility is sought after as the distinguishing feature of discipleship of Jesus. . . . Alas, how much proof there is that humility is not esteemed the cardinal virtue, the only root from which the graces grow, the one indispensable condition of true fellowship with Jesus. . . . Meekness and lowliness of heart are the chief marks by which those who follow the meek and lowly Lamb of God are known.”

I wonder how much of the tension between churches, and between Christians, or between Christians and non-Christians, is caused by this lack of humility in Christians. I was badly jolted one day when a Korean said to me: “You Americans are always so proud. And even if you weren’t, I wouldn’t believe it, because if I had all you had I’d be proud myself.” If that is the handicap we work against, how much harder we must strive to be humble.

Again, easier said than done. We cannot go around muttering fiercely to ourselves: “Be humble. Be humble.” It does not work. If humility is so necessary, if it really is the mark of discipleship and the secret of unity in the church, then what in the world is the secret of humility, for that is the secret we need.

Paul once found himself in just such a cycle of frustration. He described it to the Romans: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7: 15, 18, 24). But the answer comes at once, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7: 25). The answer is always Christ. The secret of humility is Christ. “Be united,” Paul urges. “How?” we ask. “Be humble,” he replies. “How?” “Be in Christ,” says Paul as he now begins to unfold the final secret of unity and joy.

Philippians 2: 5-11—The Secret of Unity

Have this mind . . . in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. . . . He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name

which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This great passage is the glory of the letter. It is a description of the humility that *can* be ours when we are in Christ, who is both the power and the example for our pursuit of that elusive virtue.

1. *The power* (v. 5). The usual interpretation of this difficult verse is to take it as an appeal to the example of Jesus Christ. That is the sense of the King James Version, and that sense is not at all foreign to this passage. The example is there, as we shall see. But the example is not enough. It has been pointed out by a theologian in India that the example of Christ is not an ordinary Pauline pattern of thought. M. Hollis writes, “[Paul] does not argue that Christians can do something because Jesus has done it, in the sense that what man has done man can do.” He is more radical and dynamic than that. What Paul says over and over again is that Christians can do what was before impossible because they are “in Christ,” new men in Christ. “The humanly impossible [humility, unity] is possible because they are in Christ.” (“A Further Note on Philippians 2: 5,” in *The Indian Journal of Theology*, VII, p. 4.)

The New English Bible translates the verse, “Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus.” In other words, let your mutual relationships be governed not by your natural minds, your old nature, but by the new nature, the mind which is yours *in Christ*. The power is in him. It becomes ours when we are in him.

2. *The example* (vs. 6-11). This is one of the most profound Christological passages in the whole Bible, but Paul uses it not to teach theology, so much, as to teach a very practical truth about Christian living in a very practical situation. It is a lofty passage used to teach a lowly truth, humility.

It may also be the very first Christian hymn. The style stands out sharply from the casual manner of the rest of the letter. Every phrase is measured, every word exact and balanced. To catch the flavor of the original, read Milton, not the Bible’s English prose.

“That glorious Form, that Light insufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heavn’s high Council-Table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and here with us to be,
Forsook the Courts of everlasting Day,
And chose with us a darksome House of mortal Clay.”

“On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity.”

It is more than a hymn, however, it is a three-point sermon on the person

and work of Jesus Christ. First Paul sweeps us back to the beginning of time for an exceedingly rare glimpse of Christ before he came to earth, the pre-existent Christ. Next he focuses on the hinge of history, the incarnation. Finally he moves on majestically to the end of time and Christ's exaltation. Why all this just to teach humility?

a. *The preexistent Christ* (v. 6). Paul begins with Christ before he came to earth because it is this that gives *ethical* meaning to the example. It is precisely because Christ *was* God that his becoming a man and a servant had meaning. There is no humility in a man being a man, or a servant being a servant. There is even less humility in a man becoming God as some modern heresies about Christ would have it.

Christ was God. That is where Paul begins. "He [Christ] was in the form of God," he writes. It is only in the English that his language is ambiguous. The Greeks had two separate words for form. One refers to outer, changing shapes, as when "a cloud takes the *form* of a mountain" (*The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 11, p. 48). That is not the one used here. Paul uses the other word, *morphē*, which is the kind of form that expresses what the object really is. If Christ has the form of God in this sense, then God is what he really is. Phillips translates it, "He who had always been God by nature."

b. *The incarnate Christ* (vs. 7-8). He who had always been God . . . *became man*. The Lord of Glory took "the form of a servant"—once again the word "form," though Paul uses the weaker word here, the word for "outer shape." This in no way implies a "reverse unitarianism," that is, that Jesus was not really a man but was just God masquerading like a man. There are some branches of the Coptic Church, which do in this way virtually deny the real humanity of Christ, but they have become isolated, introverted, superstitious, and selfish—an object lesson on what will happen to any church that forgets that God really did become a servant. It simply ceases to be relevant. The deity of Christ makes the humiliation *ethical*; the incarnation makes it *relevant*. This is why, in 1956, a committee of the World Presbyterian Alliance, meeting in Prague to choose a theme for the 18th General Council in São Paulo that would be as relevant to Christians on one side of the Curtain as the other, finally picked out this passage. They linked it with Isa., ch. 53, and John, ch. 13, and chose as the theme for the Quadrennium, "The Servant Lord and His Servant People."

What does it take to become a "servant people"? Will giving up our luxuries do it? When the Communists rolled over us in Peking, knowing what propaganda use they made of our "capitalist affluence," we tried to simplify our living standards. One of the most warmhearted missionaries I have ever known outdid us all. He got rid of his furniture, his rugs; he ate the simplest of food, wore his oldest clothes. When the first Communist soldier came into the house, Hal welcomed him into the bare rooms. "We are here to serve, not to exploit," he tried to indicate. The little soldier smiled and looked at his shoes. That was all; he just looked at his shoes. And Hal finally looked down

at his shoes too and his heart sank. His were leather; the soldier was wearing frayed old canvas tennis shoes.

It is not the things we give up that count for humility. Humility is in the heart. We need not argue too much, therefore, about what it was that Christ emptied himself of, in Phil. 2: 7. His glory? His omnipotence? Paul would brush all that aside as idle speculation. "He emptied *himself*," is what Paul says. He poured himself out in utter self-sacrifice for us, as water is poured from a vase; and at the end he died for us.

This was the climax of humiliation, the cross (v. 8). In Philippians, the phrase "death on a cross" takes on a specially moving intensity. For Paul was a Roman. The Philippians to whom he was writing were Romans, too, citizens of a colony with special Roman rights. Neither Paul nor the Philippians could ever be sentenced to death by crucifixion. It was too humiliating a death for a Roman. But not too humiliating for our Servant Lord. What an example! He suffered for the Philippians a death they could never be asked to suffer for him. And what does he ask in return? Humility. It is as important as that, this secret of unity.

c. *The exalted Christ* (vs. 9-11). First the cross; then the crown. After the climax of humiliation comes a climax of joy, as the final section of Paul's picture of the whole Christ falls into place. It is as if Paul had chosen to paint the picture as a triptych, a great three-paneled screen. Note the curious construction. Two of the panels are shining gold, while the center panel, which is in the place of honor, is made of wood, old blackened wood, at that, the wood of a cross. On the first side is the preexistent Christ in glory: gold and ivory. In the center is the incarnation: "out of the ivory palaces" to death on a wooden cross. But the third panel is shining gold again: the exaltation, which is Christ's reward.

Reward is a dangerous thought to add to an appeal to humility. Rewards can corrupt humility and destroy unity and turn joy into sorrow more quickly than any persecution. Some, therefore, have gone so far as to say that the idea of reward does not belong in the Christian faith. They are usually against punishment too. But there is no such unreal world. Rewards and punishments are facts of life. Of course they can be misused. So can food and sex and liberty and love. The answer to their abuse is not their abolition but their proper use.

When God rewards, the reward is just. It is not self-sought or self-bestowed. Quite the opposite. Christ came to suffer, not to be exalted. "Christ emptied Christ," observes J. A. Bengel (*Gnomon of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 134); "God exalted Christ." The Lord came to be a servant; *therefore* he has been made Lord.

He has been given, also, "the name which is above every name" (v. 9). Even in non-Christian lands, where the Christian faith is sharply attacked and the

church is often persecuted, men are usually careful not to criticize the name of Jesus. The Communists try to use the name rather than attack it. Their propagandists labor to capture Jesus for the revolution. "He was a carpenter's son," they say, "a workingman, the first martyr of the revolution, crucified by the imperialists." There is still such power in the name that even the enemy tries to borrow something of its power.

And we who bear the name, how much of its power do we carry?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the three great causes of discord and disunity suggested by Phil. 2: 3-4?
2. People who are most in earnest about their beliefs are sometimes most prone to factionalism. Why? Does Paul, therefore, call for reduced conviction and commitment as an aid to unity? Name four or five considerations or appeals set down by Paul for the prevention of disharmony.
3. The early Christians had a one-sentence creed. See if you can construct a brief creed of your own from ch. 2: 5-11.
4. What is humility? Hitler said it was no virtue at all but a weakening vice. How would you answer him?
5. Jesus is called the Servant Lord. What does the paradox mean? Why are both sides of the paradox important?
6. What does Christian service require of us?
7. What is the difference between Christ as power and Christ as example?

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE MORE INTENSIVE STUDY

1. Make a study of specific examples of Christ's humility in the Gospels. (Matt. 11: 29; Luke 2: 4-7; v. 51; Matt. 13: 55; Luke 9: 58; Matt. 9: 10-11; ch. 20: 28; John 13: 5; and many others.)
2. Where is Christ's deity most clearly taught in the Bible? See, for example: Heb. 1: 3-6; Col. 2: 9; John 14: 9; Matt. 1: 23; John 1: 1; ch. 20: 28; I Tim. 3: 16. Find others.
3. Where is Christ's humanity most clearly taught? Begin with Matt. 13: 55; John 1: 14; Gal. 4: 4; I Tim. 2: 5.

4. For a more thorough study of the meaning of the key phrase, "in Christ," read James S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, especially Ch. IV, pp. 147-203.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Study Phil. 2: 12-30.
2. Read Chapter 5 in the Study Guide.

THE PURSUIT OF UNITY

Philippians 2:12-30

THE GREAT HYMN has thundered to its close, and with v. 12 Paul abruptly comes back to Philippi. He leaves the future, with its vision of the Lord in cosmic triumph, and returns to the persistent problems of the present. There is still a little trouble in Philippi.

At once the apostle is all business. The lyric mood is over. Stern and affectionate by turn, he first lectures the Philippians like an Old Testament prophet, then chats with them like a friend.

Philippians 2: 12-13—Responsibility for Unity

Therefore . . . as you have always obeyed, so now . . . in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you.

With his first word Paul indicates that though the mood has changed, he is still writing about the same subject, unity in the church. The hymn is over, but the “therefore” in v. 12 resumes the appeal to the example of Christ’s humility which is the key to unity.

The stress is on the element of obedience in that example. As Christ was obedient (v. 8), so now you must be obedient (v. 12), he says. Then, as Christ’s obedience brought exaltation, you may expect that your obedience will bring salvation. This puts the responsibility squarely where it belongs, on them. Do not depend on me any longer, he is saying; depend on yourselves. “Work out your *own* salvation.” (See Joseph B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 116.)

But what a shocking phrase to find in a letter from Paul! If there is anything the Christian can *not* do in Paul’s gospel of grace, it is work out his own salvation. To the Galatians, to the Romans, to all his churches, he has written time and again to warn against the fatal illusion that salvation can be earned. “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? . . . Did you receive the Spirit by works?” (Gal. 3: 1-2.) How can he now calmly turn his back on everything for which he had fought so vigorously, and teach the Philippians work-righteousness?

Some Bible scholars suggest that the apostle must have caught his own mistake and hastily corrected it in the next verse. Having written “work out your own salvation,” he stops, recovers himself, and quickly changes the subject of the verb. Not “you work,” but “God works in you.”

No, Paul means both. “You work” *and* “God works.” The next chapter will make quite clear that Paul has lost none of his fire against the salvation-by-works heretics and that he has not abandoned free grace or salvation by faith. But neither has he abandoned an equally important doctrine, the doctrine of human responsibility. Paul does not try to resolve the paradox between man’s free will and God’s determining will. He teaches both, as if confident that parallel truths like parallel lines, though they may not be brought together on earth by finite minds, will nevertheless meet in the infinity of the life hereafter.

There is not as much of a paradox in these verses, however, as might be thought, if we read them in context. The subject is obedience and unity, not salvation. The “work” Paul is urging on the Philippians is simply the kind of obedience to God that comes from humility and leads to unity. In other words, obedience like Christ’s. This was the whole point of the great hymn of Christ’s example. And the “salvation” of which he speaks is not the goal of the work, not even its direct result—the direct result was death. Salvation is a reward, and in the case of man, as Paul makes very clear elsewhere, it is an unearned reward, a free gift (Eph. 2: 8-9).

The balance between “work out your own salvation” and “God is at work in you” has been put this way: “You work out what God works in.” This puts the weight on the right side of the partnership, but the truth is deeper than that. Paul is not drawing up a legal contract, with footnotes spelling out just what part is God’s work and what part is man’s. His thought, rather, is of a spiritual union, a blending of wills. It is the other side of his favorite phrase, “in Christ.” When we are “in Christ,” then God is “in us.” “For God is at work in you.”

Surely, here is the place for a shout of joy. God is with us! Why does Paul speak instead so soberly of “fear and trembling”? The phrase conjures up memories of harsh Puritan preaching, of Jónathan Edwards and soul-shaking sermons like “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Actually it is only to the modern mind that the fear of God seems incompatible with joy; and Edwards’ God is nearer to Paul’s than the “sweet little old somebody up there” of today’s pop theology. But in this case Paul is not speaking of God’s anger. His reference is rather to God’s cooperating presence. The fear of which the verse speaks, therefore, is not terror at God’s anger, but that proper sense of awe which man must not lose as he stands before the presence of the Almighty.

There is a place in life for the right kind of fear. A man who goes into battle without proper fear will never make a good soldier. A man who comes

before God without the proper fear will never make a good Christian. Christians who presume on the promise of God's presence to claim a first-name, hand-holding, buddy-buddy relationship with Deity do not really know in whose presence they stand. This is the God who answers by fire (I Kings 18: 24); the thunder of whose power no man can understand (Job 26: 14). He knows the secrets of the heart (Ps. 44: 21) and all things are naked and open before him (Heb. 4: 13). There can be no easy familiarity in such a presence, but vigilance, rather, and awe and reverential fear. Sir Edmund Hillary, conqueror of Everest, says that every minute he is on a mountain he is afraid, but now that he has learned to live with fear, it no longer paralyzes. It only keeps him keen and alert. In this kind of fear there is no dismay, but a fierce joy and a strange attraction that draws the climber back again and again to the mountains. So it is with the fear of God. There is no terror in it for the Christian but confidence and joy and a strange attraction that draws him with reverence into the very presence of God.

Philippians 2: 14-18—The Marks of Responsibility

Do all things without grumbling . . . , that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God . . . in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that . . . I may be proud. . . . Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice. . . . Be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul continues his lecture on Christian unity by outlining four further marks of obedient, responsible Christians.

1. *They get along with their fellow Christians.* Do not grumble, or argue, or question one another's motives, says Paul. These were the signs of disunity that tore apart the Children of Israel in the wilderness and delayed for so many years their entrance into the Promised Land. Petty personal differences and rivalries can tear a church apart as fast as theological differences. In fact, the latter is often used only as an excuse for a division that was actually caused by the former.

2. *They are an example to non-Christians.* A Korean proverb runs, "It takes only one fish to muddy a whole stream." For one person's lapse, a whole congregation can be blamed; for one congregation's disunity the whole church can be discredited. So "be blameless," says Paul, and "shine like stars in a dark world" (Moffatt's translation). But what kind of shining example is a divided church? "A world lying broken and half-dead on one side of the road," said Dr. Walter Horton, "will not be helped much by a church lying broken and half-dead on the other side."

3. *They hold the faith.* The "word of life" of which Paul speaks, is the

gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ. Christians are both to hold it fast and hold it out—the word Paul uses can mean either. There is unity in holding to the center, to Jesus Christ who *is* the Word of Life. But holding to the center will propel us to the ends of the earth, for unity is for mission and for giving the Word of Life to the whole world.

4. *They are expendable.* The paragraph closes as we might by now expect of Paul with a familiar combination: a note of personal affection, a realistic look at his own desperate position, and a burst of improbable joy.

The apostle has been asking a good deal of the Philippians, lecturing at them like a preacher. Now he speaks to them as an old friend. It may be a lot to ask, he is saying, but do it; do it for me. I may not be with you much longer, and I can die happy if only I know that you are faithful. Once again the old warrior looks death in the face and is unafraid. He uses a figure of speech unfamiliar to us, but readily understood in a city like Philippi with all its pagan altars. The picture is of a cup of wine poured out upon the offering at the altar as a libation at a pagan sacrifice. The Philippians' faithfulness is their offering. Paul's death is only the cup of wine that crowns the sacrifice, and he offers his own blood as that wine, not at all appalled at the prospect. For he is expendable; it is their faithfulness that counts.

This is the final mark of Christian responsibility: to be expendable. We are Christ's expendables, says Paul, so let us all rejoice!

Philippians 2: 19-30—Leadership for Unity

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests. . . . But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me. . . . I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and . . . fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need. . . . He was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him. . . . So receive him in the Lord with all joy; and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me.

It has been suggested by some that Paul here comes to the main purpose of his letter. Disturbed by reports of disunity, he determines to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to mend the rifts in the Philippian church, and writes this letter to assure them of a proper reception. This does not quite ring true to the tone of the letter. Paul's confident hope that the Philippians themselves, by God's grace in them, will close ranks and "work out their own salvation" does not suggest that they are in urgent need of outside leadership.

Nevertheless, leadership is important and Paul does indicate that he expects much of Timothy and Epaphroditus. His descriptions of the two men are an illuminating lesson on what the greatest leader the Christian mission has ever had looked for in his fellow workers when he was picking leaders.

1. *Timothy, the missionary partner* (vs. 19-24). Timothy is Paul's closest and most trusted associate. He calls him a son. In a very helpful study of Philippians, *The Adequate Man: Paul in Philippians*, Paul Rees catches the spirit of Paul's description of Timothy in a quick, alliterative outline: He is *sympathetic*, "genuinely anxious for your welfare." He is *selfless*, "I have no one like him. . . . They all look after their own interests." He is *seasoned*, "You know his worth . . . as a son with a father he has served with me." The word for "worth" is used of tested metal.

Ultimately all three of the above characteristics are only aspects of the one indispensable condition for Christian leadership. It has already been described by Paul at the beginning of this chapter (ch. 2: 3). Moffatt translates it, "never acting for private ends." Timothy is anxious only for others, the one kind of anxiety permitted in the Christian. He is the model of the Christian leader because he is concerned for others, not himself; his thought is only for the cause of Christ, not his own interests; and he works *with* his partner, not alone.

2. *Epaphroditus, the local leader* (vs. 25-30). We might say, in terms of today's missionary partnership, that Timothy was the missionary and Epaphroditus the national worker. Timothy came from outside, though he was part Greek; whereas Epaphroditus belonged to the church of Philippi. He was probably one of its pastors and had come bringing a gift from the congregation to help Paul in prison. Like Timothy he has the marks of Christian leadership: *sympathy*, "distressed because you heard that he was ill"; *selflessness*, "risking his life to complete *your* service"; and *seasoning*, "fellow worker and fellow soldier."

It is no discredit to his missionary colleague, Timothy, that Paul singles out Epaphroditus for special mention. "Honor such men," he says. Too often the heroism of the national worker is unhonored and unsung. Everyone knows of the missionary martyrs of the Boxer rebellion. One hundred eighty-eight men, women, and children were killed and "there is no record of a single attempt at recantation or wavering of purpose," says the historian, Professor Latourette. But more than 1,900 Chinese Protestant Christians were killed by the Boxers. Theirs is the greater honor. They could so easily have escaped. When Pastor Meng, the first Chinese ordained by the North China Mission of the American Board (Congregational), heard that the missionaries were in danger, instead of fleeing for his life, he went straight to the city to help them. He insisted on keeping the preaching chapel open even when the Boxers closed in, ordering his oldest son to escape so that someone would be left to carry on the work, but staying himself at the post

until he was tortured and killed. He belongs with Epaphroditus on Paul's honor roll. (Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, p. 517.)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why is unity so important in Christian mission? Is it any less important in the church at home?
2. What are the principal causes of disunity in the American church? What are some signs of its unity? Is there a proper place for denominationalism?
3. One commentator finds five marks of the Christian in Phil. 2: 12-16. Make your own list from these verses.
4. What special traits in Paul's character do his remarks about Timothy and Epaphroditus reveal?
5. Where else do we find reference to Christians as lights in the world? What is the source of this light?
6. Verse 28 contains another of Paul's answers to anxiety. What is it?
7. What kind of obedience is Paul asking for in v. 12?

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE MORE INTENSIVE STUDY

1. a. Look up Timothy's background: I Cor. 4: 14-17; Acts 16: 1-5; ch. 19: 22.
b. What do the following references tell us about Timothy? II Tim. 1: 5; I Tim. 5: 23; I Cor. 16: 10; I Tim. 4: 12; II Tim. 2: 22; ch. 1: 8; ch. 3: 10; I Tim. 1: 2; II Tim. 1: 2; Rom. 16: 21.
2. Make a study of other Biblical passages pointing to obedience as a necessary response to God's free gift of grace. Begin with Gen. 12: 1-4; Jer. 7: 23; I Sam. 15: 22-23; Acts 5: 29; Heb. 5: 9; Rom. 6: 16-18; and Heb. 11: 8.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Study Phil. 3: 1-21.
2. Read Chapter 6 in the Study Guide.
3. Read The Letter of Paul to the Galatians.

THREE THREATS TO UNITY

Philippians 3:1-21

THE THIRD CHAPTER of Philippians begins as though Paul is ready to sign and seal the letter and send it off with Epaphroditus. He cannot end, however, without a final summons to joy. "Finally," he writes, "rejoice in the Lord." It is not anxiety about his troubles but joy in Christ that has been the theme of the whole letter, so he mentions it now again at the end.

Then, suddenly and so abruptly that some scholars have questioned whether the next paragraphs belong in the original letter at all, Paul breaks out into a blazing attack on enemies that he fears could split and divide his beloved Philippians. The enemies are his old adversaries, the Judaizers, but before he has finished with them he has warned the church about two other dangers that could destroy its unity in Christ. The chapter divides itself into three warnings: (1) against legalism (vs. 1-11); (2) against perfectionism (vs. 12-16); and (3) against libertinism (vs. 17-21).

Any one of the three can destroy Christian unity, so this group of warnings is no real interruption of the train of thought in the letter. It is rather a continuation of Paul's plea for unity through humility. Each warning is a condemnation of some form of that self-righteous pride which is the very opposite of humility. Legalism is pride in keeping the law. Perfectionism is pride in oneself. Libertinism is pride in breaking the law.

There is, therefore, no sufficient reason to doubt that this section is an integral part of Paul's letter to Philippi. It reveals more of his personal life and inner spirit than any other single part of his writings. As for the abrupt transition, his style is always swift and mercurial. It would take only a chance word dropped about the Judaizers, or the passing thought of the defenselessness of the little church in Philippi, now that he can no longer protect it in person, to start his quick mind off in a new direction. At any rate, whatever the reason, he cannot bring himself to say farewell without these three final admonitions.

Philippians 3: 1-11—Self-righteous Legalists

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. . . . Look out for the dogs, . . . for the evil-workers . . . who mutilate the flesh. . . .

We are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. Though . . . if any . . . man thinks he has reason for confidence . . . , I have more: circumcised . . . , a Hebrew born of Hebrews; . . . a Pharisee, . . . a persecutor of the church, . . . under the law blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. . . . I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God . . . ; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, . . . that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Just before the beginning of his mission to Europe and his first visit to Philippi some thirteen years earlier, Paul had fought and won one of the most decisive battles in church history. His defense of Christian liberty at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts, ch. 15) was a turning point in the whole course of Christian thought. His opponents were the Judaizers. It was only natural that among the early Christians many were unable to see how radically the coming of Christ had changed the entire pattern of man's relationship to God. Jewish themselves, and reared in Judaism, the foundation of their thinking was still the Mosaic law. It was inconceivable to them that one could become a Christian save on this foundation. The issue was simple. Must a man become a Jew before he can become a Christian? Yes, said the Judaizers, he must first submit to the Jewish initiatory rite of circumcision. No, said Paul. There is only one foundation, Jesus Christ, and any man is free to come to him directly, not through Moses. He appealed to the apostles in Jerusalem. And there, in a decision that changed the tide of history, the council stood solidly with Paul for liberty.

To have that victory questioned now at Philippi makes Paul's anger rise, and his language thickens. Bluntly, almost brutally, he slashes out at those who would divide the church and take it captive again into the bondage of the law. "Dogs," and flesh mutilators, he calls them, and zeroes in on their central error. The first and fatal mistake of legalists is a smothering concern for the nonessential. In the case of the Judaizers it took the form of obsessive concern with Jewish rites and race and legal righteousness. These, therefore, are what Paul attacks. What the Judaizers falsely insist are the essentials of the faith, he exposes as only the externals. What counts is Christ, he says.

1. *Rites* (vs. 2-3). Circumcision is nothing, he argues; Christ is everything. His appeal is from ritual circumcision to true circumcision. He echoes a truth that not even his Judaizing opponents can deny, for it comes from the Old Testament, namely, that genuine circumcision is more than a cutting of the flesh; it is a "circumcision of the heart" (Deut. 10: 16). The gospel does not begin with the body and its mutilation; it is of the spirit. We worship God in spirit, says Paul, and glory not in ceremonies but in Christ.

2. *Race* (vs. 4-7). Jewishness is nothing, Paul continues; Christ is everything. The narrow concern of the Judaizers for rites and ceremonies was only a symptom of a more serious ill. Its deeper and fiercely dangerous root was racial pride. Paul's attack on this evil is devastating, for he strikes at it from within. An outsider's criticism they could dismiss as jealousy. But all that was so precious to them in their Jewishness, Paul already had and more. He ticks off his claims to pure membership like a Klansman adding up his 100-percent Americanism, then icily brushes it aside as dirt with the contempt it deserves.

His appeal is from racial Jewishness to true Jewishness, and from racial Israel to the true Israel. Perhaps the suggestion came from Luke, his traveling companion in Philippi, whose Gospel, as Ernest J. Tinley's *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: Luke* points out, takes as its central theme the assertion that the "true Israel" is Christ. The man "in Christ" is more truly Jewish, therefore, than mere circumcision can ever make him. What makes a man a true Israelite? A primitive surgical rite? Proud and proper birth? Fanatic, narrow zeal? Pharisaic rectitude? I had all that and found it empty form, says Paul. The truth, the essence, the "incomparable worth" is Jesus Christ.

3. *Legal righteousness* (vs. 8-11). Human righteousness is nothing, Paul says; Christ is everything. His appeal is from the righteousness that comes from keeping the law, to true righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. It has been said that these verses contain the clearest statement of the doctrine of justification by faith in Scripture. It was Rom. 1: 17 that caught at Luther's heart and sparked the mighty Reformation, but the same truth is even more simply and clearly brought into focus here. In fact, Phil. 4: 9 is a one-sentence summary of the whole letter to the Romans.

The contrast is between work-righteousness and faith-righteousness. Luther, as a monk, knew only the former. "You must earn your salvation," his friends told him, repeating the error of the Judaizers. So the young professor would go home at night from his lectures and beat himself in his room until the blood ran. Then, fearing that mortification of the flesh might not be enough for salvation, he threw himself into works of mercy and went about doing good. A plague came to the town. Monks, students, and faculty scattered to safety and begged him to fly with them. Luther refused. "My place is with the sick and dying," he said. "I am afraid of death, but there are things worse than death." He was thinking of hell. Surely, he thought to himself, if I die doing good works and caring for the sick, even the All-Terrible God will grant me the sweet mercy of forgiveness. But he did not die, and not even in good works did he find a sense of forgiveness. He still suffered the torments of the damned.

Then, one day in May, he began to prepare some lectures on Paul's letters. "He who through faith is righteous shall live," he read in Romans, and all at once and so strongly that he believed it was the direct work of the Holy

Spirit, he saw that the righteousness which means forgiveness—the righteousness for which he had worked so painfully—was not his to be worked out at all. It comes not by works but by faith. It is the free gift of God's love. Man is not saved by doing good but by simple trust in Christ, like the thief on the cross. Goodness is the result of salvation, but never the cause of it.

Paul closes his blistering attack on the legalists' counterfeit Christianity with a short and moving summary of what it really means to be a Christian. It means not to count on our own goodness but to accept by faith Christ and his true righteousness. And it means to receive more than his righteousness; it means also to receive his power and to share his sufferings. What an unusual combination! Power and suffering. Yet this is what it will mean to be a Christian. Do not expect the power without a share of the suffering. But also, do not be anxious about the suffering, for there will be the power to bear it. And the end is not death but joy, the joy of the resurrection.

Philippians 3: 12-16—Self-satisfied Saints

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. . . . One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to that which lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded.

Paul's condemnation of the legalistic self-righteousness of the Judaizers is withering and complete, but honesty compels him to add a sharp reminder to Christians. Self-righteousness is not limited to Pharisees. There is Christian self-righteousness as well, even among the "saints." It rests on the false assumption that since by faith Christ's righteousness is ours, nothing further can be required of us. "In him" we are already perfect and sinless.

Such a passive, self-satisfied forgery of the Christian faith is given short shrift by the apostle. He attacks it from within, as he did against the legalists, but much more gently and indirectly. He uses the simple device of describing his own Christian experience, and the comparison with smug Christian perfectionists becomes embarrassingly clear. Not even Paul the apostle dares to claim he has reached perfection.

Paul's strenuous, never satisfied, restless, reaching faith is as different from the backward-looking self-righteousness of pseudoperfectionism as a race is from a testimony meeting. The real saint, as Paul describes him, is more like an athlete than an angel. He has a race to be run and a future to be won. The past is gone, and is better forgotten than continually dredged up for past experience of grace with which to bolster Christian pride. The perfection of which Paul speaks never lies in the past. It is never quite achieved; it always lies ahead. The word means full maturity. The prize toward which he presses

is that complete Christianity that is always just beyond the grasp until Christ, who has already made us his own (v. 12), calls us up at last to be with him (v. 14).

Philippians 3: 17-21—Self-serving Sinners

Join in imitating me, . . . for many . . . live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him . . . to subject all things to himself.

If there is anything worse than a self-righteous Jew or a self-righteous Christian, it is a self-righteous sinner. There are more such than might be imagined—inverted Pharisees whose delight in damning the pietists for pride in being good pushes them into the opposite trap, pride in being bad. “Glorying in shame,” Paul calls it (v. 19), and it is the worst kind of self-righteousness. The Pharisee praying, “God, I thank thee, that I am not . . . as this publican” (Luke 18: 11, KJV), is the classic example of self-righteousness. But how much worse, someone has suggested, is a publican praying, “Lord, I thank thee that I am not as this Pharisee.”

Self-righteous legalism is a hardening of the Christian arteries, a rigidity that destroys freedom, and it is wrong. But just as wrong is the kind of perpetual Christian adolescence that mistakes its first taste of liberty for the abolition of law, and defines freedom as permission to sin. It is not the legalist's *righteousness* that is wrong; it is his *self-righteousness*. Jesus himself warned the disciples, “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5: 20).

So Paul reminds self-indulgent Christians, “whose god is their belly,” who have turned the liberty of the gospel into license, that though there is no salvation in the law, there is still law in the gospel. “We are a colony of heaven,” he says (in Moffatt's splendid translation of Phil. 3: 20), and does more than contrast thereby the earth-mindedness of the libertine with the higher ideals of the Christian. To Philippi, a colony of Rome with all its pride in Roman law, the phrase would come as a reminder that heaven has its disciplines as well as its privileges. Romans were free by law; yet Romans were under law. So Christians are free by grace, but under discipline. If, in a secular state, liberty has its responsibilities, how much more in “a colony of heaven.”

Note the contrasts by which Paul sets off Christians (vs. 20-21) from willful sinners (vs. 18-19). *Their* God is their belly; *ours* is a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their minds are in the dirt; ours are in heaven. Their glory is shame; ours is the glory of Christ's resurrection power. Their end is destruction; we look with hope to the end of time, for Christ shall come again.

It is on this note that the chapter ends. Paul has turned from warnings to promise, as if he fears that his stern injunctions against so many kinds of error might leave his friends confused and anxious. But there is no reason for the Christian to be anxious about sin. He has a Savior. There is no reason for him to be anxious about *anything*. His Savior is "master of everything that is" (v. 21, Phillips).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. List the reasons why Paul could be rightfully proud of his Jewish heritage. What were the dangers involved in it?
2. In the church today rites and ceremonies can be both a help and a hindrance to our understanding of Christian truth. Explain.
3. What is Christian maturity as Paul teaches it here? How does it differ from perfectionism?
4. When Christians reject legalism, what kind of Christian disciplines remain? What is "the law still in the gospel"? See how many of the Ten Commandments you can find repeated in the New Testament.
5. What is the distinction between Christian liberty and license? What does Paul mean by those whose "God is their belly" (KJV)?
6. What does Paul mean by "knowing Christ"? How does he amplify this in terms of profit and loss?
7. What does v. 17 tell us about Paul as a teacher? Why does he remind his Philippian friends that "our commonwealth is in heaven"? (v. 20).
8. What do we mean by Christian liberty today?
9. What does Paul mean by "glorying in shame"? Give evidences of this today.

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE MORE INTENSIVE STUDY

1. Two years ago the Bible study was on Galatians. Review your study of legalism as presented in that letter. How does it compare with Phil. 3: 1-11?
2. Make a study of "righteousness" as taught in the Bible. What is the righteousness we are to seek? (See, for example, Rom. 10: 1-4; Luke 18: 9-14; Isa. 45: 24; Phil. 3: 6-8; Matt. 5: 6; Eph. 4: 22-24; Gal. 2: 20-21; ch. 3: 21; Rom. 3: 20-24; ch. 9: 30-32; Titus 3: 5; Gal. 3: 6; I Cor. 1: 30; Rom. 4: 13. Using a concordance, continue your study.)

ASSIGNMENT

1. Study Phil. 4: 1-23.
2. Read Chapter 7 in the Study Guide.

FINAL APPEALS

Philippians 4:1-23

ONCE AGAIN PAUL is ready to finish the letter, and once again so many things crowd into his mind that the farewell stretches on and on as if he cannot bring himself to say good-by to ones so dear to him. Love crowds in between every word of the first verse of this last chapter.

But Christian love is not blind, as Paul proves when he proceeds at once to rebuke his beloved Philippians for a break in their unity. Like the love of God, who loved us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5: 8), Paul's love for his friends in Philippi is not lessened by his awareness of their faults. Out of such understanding love pours his final appeals for unity and joy in Christ.

Philippians 4: 1-3—Women, unite!

Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm . . . in the Lord. . . I entreat Euodia and . . . Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And I ask you . . . , true yokefellow, help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest . . . , whose names are in the book of life.

One of the minor fascinations of this passage is the mystery of the names. For sixteen hundred years people have been speculating about the identity of Euodia and Syntyche and the "true yokefellow" and Clement. Who were they? One delightfully dubious old tradition has it that Syntyche was not a woman but a man, and who else but the Philippian jailer! The same source identifies Euodia as his wife, which reduces the whole problem in Philippi to the level of a domestic spat. More romantically, some have guessed that the "true yokefellow" is Paul's wife and none other than Lydia, his first convert in Europe.

But happy fantasy aside, it is now well accepted that Euodia and Syntyche were two leading women in the Philippian church, perhaps deaconesses. Paul's tribute to them—they "labored side by side with me in the gospel"—is a mark of the significant standing of women in the early church and particularly at Philippi. Women in Macedonia seemed to enjoy a higher social

position than in almost any other part of the ancient world. Macedonian cities were erecting public monuments in honor of prominent women at a time when Greece as a whole was shockingly notorious for its degradation of the role of women in society. The best wife, a Greek historian had said, is the one who is least heard of. But in Macedonia, building on the more favorable attitude to women there, the Christian church took some of its earliest steps toward what has been called its noblest social triumph, the elevation of the status of women. (Joseph B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, pp. 55 f.; see also S. Angus, *The Environment of Early Christianity*, pp. 44 ff.)

Nowhere else in the whole record of Paul's missionary journeys do women occupy so remarkable a place in the life of the church as at Philippi. Three women were among its founders, Lydia, Euodia, and Syntyche. The name of a fourth, Stratonike, the wife of Apollonhanes, is found in a very early but apocryphal document, the *Acts of Paul*. They were the vanguard in a long line of pioneer women who worked "side by side" with the apostles and prophets in the propagation of the gospel.

There is Phoebe, for example, a deaconess "who ministers to" the church at Cenchraea (Rom. 16: 1); and Prisca, a missionary (a woman apostle!) leader of a small church in Rome (vs. 3-5). There is Priscilla, who converted and instructed Apollos, one of the best-educated and socially prominent leaders in the earliest church. (Chrysostom deduces this from the fact that she is named before her husband in the record, Acts 18: 24-26.) One whole book of the New Testament, The Second Letter of John, is addressed to a woman. By the second century Christian literature is full of references to women teachers and missionaries, like the famous "apostle" Thecla at Iconium, and during the great persecutions the roll of the saints and martyrs was filled with more than a proportionate share of women's names. Among the better classes, women of wealth and social position clearly outnumbered the men in the church.

There seem to have been two orders in the early church for women: deaconesses and "widows." The deaconesses had almost a ministerial function, serving where men could not properly minister in that age, such as in the baptism, instruction, and supervision of the women of the church. The "widows" on the other hand, were essentially Christian social workers, as in I Tim. 5: 10. One very early document, the *Apostolic Church Order*, directs that every church should maintain three widows, of whom two should be devoted to prayer while the other is to be a sick nurse. (See C. Biggs, *The Origins of Christianity*, pp. 268 f.)

It is a melancholy fact that the two women leaders at Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche, would probably be unknown to us except for their quarrel. What a contrast between the first mention of women in that church (Acts, ch. 16), and this second mention here. It was women at prayer who gave the Philippian church its foundation; it is women quarreling who now threaten

to shatter that foundation and destroy its unity. The more important women become in the life of the church, the more important become the purity and unity of their lives together in Christ. But it is reassuring to note that there was still no open break, no schism, and Paul is confident that with the help of their fellow Christians, including the "true yokefellow" (who was, perhaps, the husband of one of the two), the breach will be healed and harmony restored. So again he says, "Rejoice!"

Philippians 4: 4-9—Worry About Nothing; Rejoice in Everything

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer . . . with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and . . . minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, . . . honorable, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . gracious, if there is any excellence, . . . anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have . . . heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul has three important things to say in this passage about the deep roots and wide reaches of the joy that drives out fear and calms anxiety.

1. It is, first of all, *a joy that begins in Christ* (vs. 4-5). Note how easily and naturally Paul works into his plea for harmony and joy a reminder that it takes more than a turning to each other to restore Christian unity in God's people. Three times he repeats the seminal phrase, "in the Lord": "Stand firm in the Lord" (v. 1); "Agree in the Lord" (v. 2); and now again, "Rejoice in the Lord" (v. 4). He is a good teacher. Repetition enforces the lesson he has already taught in ch. 2 that the power for Christian joy and unity comes not from man but from Christ, for being "in Christ." So sure is Paul of this power that he can dismiss the shadow of the quarrel from his mind, depending on Euodia and Syntyche to demonstrate openly what they already have in Christ, namely, the gentle and forgiving spirit that Paul calls "forbearance" (v. 5).

In that confidence the apostle turns again to the joy that never fails him, joy in the Lord, and adds the happy shout of the early Christians, which was their watchword and signal, the last word on the lips of the martyrs as they faced, with a joy their persecutors could never understand, the beasts and the fire and the sword. "The Lord is at hand." "Maranatha." He is with us now; and he will come again. So what is there to fear? Rejoice!

2. It is *a joy without anxiety that grows by prayer* (vs. 6-7). There is indeed absolutely nothing for the Christian to be anxious about, says Paul. In his book *The Adequate Man: Paul in Philippians*, Paul Rees quotes a physician's analysis of the "worries" he was called upon to treat as patients. "Forty per-

cent worried over things that never happened. Thirty percent of the worries analysed were related to past matters which were now beyond the patients' control. Twelve percent were anxious about their health, although their only illness was in their imagination. Ten percent worried over their families, their friends or the neighbors, although in most cases there was no substantial basis for the fears that were causing trouble. Just eight percent of the worries seemed to have some basis in conditions that needed to be remedied."

Paul's answer to all such anxieties, real or imagined, is, Take them to the Lord in prayer. That has a dangerous sound to it, to be sure. It could be just another pious platitude, except for the vitalizing little phrase that is attached to it: "with thanksgiving" (v. 6). Pray thankfully, says Paul, not anxiously, not adding to all your other anxieties by wondering how long it will take God to do all you are asking him to do. Paul does not promise that God will do what you ask. All he ever promises is that God hears prayer. But for the privilege of access to the very throne of God who would not be thankful, and who can fail but find peace in his presence? The verse that follows (v. 7) has brought more peace to more troubled minds than all the psychotherapy in the world, rightfully important though psychotherapy is even for Christians. There is somehow a healing, tranquil power even in the simple repetition of the verse: "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This is Paul's promise from the Spirit to the anxious. Perhaps in English the words are almost too soothing. Paul's actual language is almost military. There is no weakness in it, but power. "God's peace shall stand sentry, shall keep guard over your hearts," is how Bishop Lightfoot paraphrases it.

3. It is a joy that delights in every good thing (vs. 8-9). In v. 8, Paul moves from the world of a Judeo-Christian benediction into the clear, cold world of Greek philosophy. The list of virtues that he begins to enumerate is pure Greek. This is rare for Paul, who was all Jewish, and a little Roman, but Greek only around the edges. He was raised, however, in a Greek university town, and he was writing to a church in Greece, and he was no narrow iconoclast. All that was good in Rome he was willing to use for the gospel. Perhaps he is reminding his converts here that all that is good in Greece, too—all the truth and riches of the highest philosophy the world has known outside of Christ—this too can be used for the gospel.

There is a change in the language and in the atmosphere, but there is no real break in the continuity of thought. Paul has spoken, in v. 7, of the peace of God which keeps our minds in Christ Jesus. This is its protection and its source of strength, but the language might also suggest a restricting confinement. As if to correct any such misapprehension, in the next verse Paul begins to describe the high, free horizons of the Christian mind. It delights in all the greatest virtues, the loftiest goals that man anywhere and anytime has ever conceived: (1) truth, the goal of science and philosophy; (2) honor, the highest prize of human ethics; (3) justice (or righteousness), the aim of

law and religion; (4) purity, the supreme virtue in personal morality; (5) loveliness, and all that is best in art (though the word refers more to personal charm than abstract beauty); and (6) graciousness, or praiseworthiness, which is the mark of a good reputation, the highest honor society can bestow.

Paul sums up the whole list of virtues in two words, "excellence" and "praise," and thereby baptizes with his blessing all that is good and praiseworthy in this world wherever it may be found. The Christian's mind need run in no restricted ruts. It has its disciplines, and it is to be kept "in Christ," but it is free to rove the whole world to seek beauty, truth, and goodness.

"Believe; don't think," says the frightened Christian, but it is not the Bible speaking. "Believe, *and* think," says Paul. "Think on these things," as I do. "And the God of peace will be with you."

Philippians 4: 10-20—A Word of Thanks and a Lesson in Contentment

I rejoice in the Lord . . . that now . . . you have revived your concern for me. . . . Not that I complain . . . ; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. . . . I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. . . . When I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you. . . . Not that I seek the gift; but . . . the fruit which increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more . . . from . . . the gifts you sent. . . . And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever. . . . Amen.

This is Paul's thank-you note for the gifts from his converts in Philippi. What a masterpiece of letter writing! Who but Paul could thank a donor for his gift so graciously, all the time telling him he really didn't need it. No one but Paul could do it, perhaps because no one but Paul saw so clearly as he the glorious paradox of the Christian life. It is a life on two levels. Paul was in prison, but at the same time he was in Christ. The Philippians were to be good citizens of Philippi (ch. 1: 27, where the word "worthy" refers to citizenship), but they were also citizens of heaven (ch. 3: 20). This may be a paradox, but it is not a contradiction. The final secret of contentment, Paul tells his anxious age, is to learn to live on two levels, not in tension, but in peace.

The paradox of the two levels, as well as the resolution of the paradox in Christ, is pointed up in the sharp contrast between a verse at the beginning of the letter and another here near the end. "Paul . . . [a] slave of Jesus Christ." That is how the letter begins. But it closes with that slave asserting, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (v. 13). Only a slave, but he

has unlimited power. The New Testament way to power and joy and contentment and peace is to become the servant, the slave, the captive of the Servant Lord.

“Make me a captive, Lord, And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword, And I shall conqueror be.
I sink in life’s alarms When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within Thine arms, And strong shall be my hand.

“My heart is weak and poor Until it master find;
It has no spring of action sure—It varies with the wind.
It cannot freely move Till Thou hast wrought its chain;
Enslave it with Thy matchless love, And deathless it shall reign.”

On one level of life Paul was a prisoner in Rome and a servant of Christ and of all Christ’s people. On this level he needed help and needed it desperately. When the Philippians responded in love to his need, his gratitude was as genuine as their love. That level, the level of need, is as real and inescapable as hunger and thirst and sickness and death.

But there is another level, the level of needs supplied (v. 19), of anxieties quieted (vs. 6-7), of utter contentment (v. 11), and of power overflowing (v. 13). At this level Paul had no need of human gifts, and no more wants. He had learned to be content.

This part of the letter, as J. H. Michael, quoting Carlyle, points out, is inseparably associated with Oliver Cromwell. As the Great Protector began to weaken of the sickness that was to cause his death, he called for a Bible and asked that Phil. 4: 11-13 be read to him. He listened, and said: “‘This Scripture did once save my life; when my eldest son died; which went as a dagger to my heart, indeed it did.’ And then repeating the words of the text himself, and reading the tenth and eleventh verses, of Paul’s contentment and submission to the will of God in all conditions—said he: ‘It’s true, Paul, *you* have learned this and attained to this measure of grace: but what shall *I* do? Ah poor creature, it is a hard lesson for me to take out! I find it so!’ But reading on to the thirteenth verse, where Paul saith, ‘I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me,’—then faith began to work, and his heart to find support and comfort, and he said thus to himself, ‘He that was Paul’s Christ is my Christ too!’ And so drew waters out of the well of Salvation.”

Paul’s Christ *is* our Christ, and by him, says Paul, “God will supply your every need.” The key word is *supply*. Scientists tell us the real problem is not resources but supply. There is enough food in the world for all if man could only distribute it. There is enough power in the sunlight falling on the Arizona desert to keep everybody in the world warm and to turn all the dynamos on earth, if we could only harness and distribute it. All the anxieties

of the world center in the unbridged gap between these two levels of life—between need and abundance, weakness and power, want and contentment. The lesson of Philippians is that the gap has been bridged by Jesus Christ. He crossed the gulf. God became Man, becoming poor that we might be rich. In him, says Paul, all God's "riches in glory" are ours.

But there is one other key word, *needs*. It does not read, *wants*. To learn the difference is to know another of the secrets of the Christian answer to anxiety.

Philippians 4: 21-23—A Personal Farewell

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. . . . All the saints greet you. . . .
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Even after he has said "Amen," Paul cannot quite bring himself to end the letter to his friends whom he may never see again. He greets them once more, every one; repeating as he does so the vital phrase "in Christ Jesus," which has breathed life and power into every part of the letter. Then, as he ends, his last words pick up the theme with which he started, unity. In the old King James Version the benediction reads, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," but the better manuscripts have Paul's final emphasis in his last words to the Philippians falling on unity. Not "you all" and the diversity of the plural, but "your spirit" and the unity of the singular. "Be with your spirit," his benediction ends, for "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" has indeed made them one.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What bearing has ch. 4: 1-7 on the situation at Philippi?
2. In the first three verses what are the three things Paul gives the Philippians to do "in the Lord"?
3. Is the role of men and women in the church today different from that in Paul's day? How?
4. What are two great qualities of the Christian life as set forth by Paul in vs. 4 and 5?
5. How is the essential character of the letter reflected in ch. 4: 4-7?
6. What was Paul's secret of contentment?
7. What makes Paul most happy about the gift from the church in Philippi?

FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE MORE INTENSIVE STUDY

1. What are the most striking characteristics of Paul's letter to the Philippians?
2. Review all the different answers to anxiety that Paul suggests in this letter.
3. Try writing a one-page summary of Philippians in letter style.



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